Soviets Outfox US Intelligence Agencies

A leading staffer of the US Senate Intelligence Committee, Dr. Angelo Codevilla, has written a damning indictment of American intelligence.

The US intelligence agencies have failed lamentably to anticipate Soviet nuclear weapons developments, according to the senate staffer. He cites the present structure of Soviet nuclear forces as a "huge, ominous development" which the intelligence agencies simply "missed."

Charges Codevilla: "The national intelligence estimates had been telling policymakers that the Soviet Union would not undertake efforts (in developing nuclear forces) that, in fact, it had undertaken."

He cites as another intelligence failure the CIA's estimate that Iran was "not in a revolutionary or even a pre-revolutionary situation" even while the Khomeini revolution was being rather openly organized in Paris, Washington, Beirut, Teheran and in Baku (USSR).

Third, he cites rather farcical arguments between the CIA and the FBI over whether Soviet "defectors" Yuri Mosenko and one codenamed Fedora were genuine or not.

Codevilla summarizes: "None familiar with US intelligence suggests the United States receives anything like the kind of intelligence it needs."

Furthermore Codevilla says the CIA have allowed their clandestine and covert activities to run down so far they are nearly non-existent. Moreover the CIA has adopted structural changes which makes its internal security and counter-intelligence quite ineffectual.

Agent recruitment by the CIA has declined to the extent that "we do not recruit agents, so much as accept and use those who approach us" charges Codevila.

A principal problem the staffer says is that since the onset of detente, the CIA and other US intelligence agencies lack any clearly defined role or mission.

These are the themes of a rather sensational article in the summer issue of the Georgetown Center For Strategic and International Studies Journal *Washington Quarterly*. Codevilla is believed cleared to the highest levels of security so he receives highly classified intelligence reports and sits in on closed sessions of this top congressional intelligence committee.

Codevilla reveals some of the policy issues at the root of the fuss over CIA director William Casey and his shortlived deputy Max Hugel within the CIA. They wanted early in the term of the Reagan administration to beef up the clandestine service and to allow it to run officers outside US government cover.

The senate staffer says "All but a handful of our clandestine officers are under rather thin official cover." In other words all but a tiny number of CIA officers are working in the guise of US diplomats, military and embassy personnel.

Codevilla observes that the US "does not really have a clandestine service." Almost all CIA work is nowadays done out of embassies and consulates. This makes agent recruitment very difficult and foreign surveillance of CIA activities rather simple. Moreover since they live and work as diplomats these days "it is not surprising that most of their (CIA) reports read like diplomatic dispatches."

The professional service vigorously resists the recruitment of CIA officers among foreigners and even from outside the US government service, even though there are no legal restrictions on this. Early on in his term Reagan appointee William Casey tried to improve the CIA's clandestine service by recruitment of officers outside the US Government Service, comments Codevilla: "Casey's early efforts were on the right track."

The implication, however, is that the "union mentality" of professional spooks working out of US government service offices has prevailed and the CIA remains hardly clandestine at all.

Operational security within the CIA has suffered badly since an organizational change in 1975 says the senate staffer. At that time the Central Office Counterintelligence (CI) staff was disbanded. CI had become "too powerful to suit the strong geographic divisions of the directorate of operations." They had "questioned the bonafides of too many agents" and generated too much hostility."

On the disbandment of central counter-intelligence in 1975, the function was handed over to staff within the various geographic operations directorates. Counter intelligence, or checking out of reports and agents to weed out falsehood, is no longer the responsibility of a specialist arm of the CIA but a temporary job of operations personnel assigned to the job for a short period. These checkers are totally dependent for their promotions and future on the operations chiefs they are supposed to be checking.

The CIA and the FBI are frequently at loggerheads in counter-intelligence work says Codevilla and the two have no understanding as to division of responsibility.

Counter-intelligence has become a "sit and wait for indications (of deception or disloyalty) and then to check them out."

Most counter intelligence enquiries arise out of "allegations" and after "disastrous effects" have occurred. Codevilla says that there is no counter-intelligence analysis done by either the CIA or the FBI. As a result "no agency can hope to do more than stumble onto cases" of disloyalty and disinformation.

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The senate staffer says that US "technical means" (satellite, radio intercept and bugging equipment etc) of intelligence are designed primarily for arms control monitoring and are "fit only for operation in peacetime." They are not designed for use in time of war.

In addition "technical operational security is barely in the conceptual stage," suggesting that the Soviets do not have too much trouble plugging into US intelligence data.

Most serious is the promotions system within the intelligence agencies. Intelligence analysts are promoted not according to the accuracy and far sightedness of their work "but rather for being good soldiers in the intelligence community's intra-mural battles."

Says Codevilla of the intelligence agencies: "It is often better to be wrong for bureaucratically acceptable reasons than to be right about the facts and galling to one's superiors."